

SHARING LOVE AT CHRISTMAS

A Heartwarming Celebration for the Elderly in Jos



On December 22, 2024, the Help the Aged Initiative, in partnership with For the Nigerian, Bris-Care Humanitarian Foundation, and Smallie Kitchen, hosted a festive celebration for 20 elderly individuals in Jos, Plateau State. The event, titled “Sharing Love at Christmas,” was designed to bring warmth, companionship, and joy to older adults during the holiday season.

Held as a community fun fair, the gathering featured an array of engaging activities that rekindled memories and encouraged social connection. Elderly guests were treated to:

- Dancing to nostalgic music that brought back cherished memories,
- Interactive games that encouraged laughter and lighthearted competition,
- Storytelling sessions where participants shared life experiences and cultural wisdom,
- A delicious, home-cooked lunch prepared with care,
- And several other thoughtful moments that made the day truly special.

For many of the elderly attendees, the event was more than a celebration—it was a rare opportunity to feel seen, heard, and valued. Several guests expressed how deeply moved they were to relive the joys of Christmas in a way that honored their experiences and restored a sense of community and belonging.

The success of the event was made possible through the generosity and dedication of the partnering organizations and volunteers. Their contributions ensured that each participant left not only with a full stomach but also with a full heart.



Help the Aged Initiative remains committed to making such moments of connection and dignity part of everyday life for the elderly. As this celebration reminds us, sharing love should not be confined to the festive season—it should be a year-round mission.



DIGNITY IN ACTION

Help the Aged Initiative Responds to Call for Support

On February 8, 2025, the Help the Aged Initiative responded to an anonymous call from a concerned neighbor in one of our target communities. The caller pleaded for support for an elderly woman—physically impaired and in need of urgent care and sanitation assistance. Without hesitation, our team mobilized to visit her home and offer a much-needed clean-up and companionship.



Upon arrival, it became clear that the family had been doing their best under difficult circumstances. As we've observed in many homes, the burden of caregiving—especially for elderly persons with physical impairments—can become overwhelming for relatives, sometimes leading to neglect or unintentional abandonment.

The household welcomed us warmly and expressed deep relief and gratitude for the support. What might have seemed like a simple act of cleaning carried a deeper meaning—a moment of relief, dignity, and restoration for both the elderly woman and her family.



As the cleanup progressed, her joy was unmistakable. With a broad smile and renewed energy, she expressed how happy she was to have had a bath that day—something she had longed for but had been unable to manage. Insisting on wearing her best clothes to mark the occasion, she reminded all of us that dignity in aging is not a luxury—it is a right.

The Help the Aged Initiative remains committed to stepping into such quiet crises, one home at a time, restoring hope and humanity where it's most needed.



SHE SLEPT ON GRASS

A Story of Dignity Restored

In June 2025, during a community-based intergenerational workshop organized by Help the Aged Initiative, a quiet elderly woman sitting in the front row caught everyone’s attention. Though she appeared attentive, she did not speak. It wasn’t until later in the session—during a communal sing-along—that her presence took on deeper meaning.



She responded to the music with a radiant smile, and when a facilitator addressed her directly, she nodded in acknowledgment. Her caregiver gently explained, “She can’t talk anymore. She understands, but she lost her speech.” The room fell into an emotional silence. Despite her muteness, she had communicated something profound—gratitude, joy, connection.

The session ended with games and shared laughter, but her presence lingered in the minds of the team. That week, the organization planned a home clean-up for another elderly person and invited caregivers and seniors from the workshop to participate. On the day of the clean-up, the team arrived at the site—and there she was again, waiting quietly, observing.



As the cleanup concluded, the original beneficiary broke into emotional prayers. The elderly woman, who had returned just to witness the event, watched with

visible longing. Her caregiver later conveyed her simple request: she, too, needed her home cleaned.

The team agreed and scheduled a visit.

What they found was deeply distressing. The woman lived in a small room she shared with poultry—a duck, chickens, and a turkey laying eggs in one corner. Her sleeping arrangement was even more heartbreaking: an old iron bed layered with sacks formerly used for rice packaging, stuffed with dried grasses and corn stalks. When lifted, the sacks revealed a colony of insects—her mattress had been home to both woman and pests for years.



The team immediately set to work. They cleaned the room thoroughly, repaired the broken windows and crumbling walls, fumigated the space, and advised that the animals be kept outside for hygiene and safety. But one question lingered: how would they provide her with a new bed?

That night, a post about her situation was shared online by the organization. Within hours, a philanthropist reached out, offering to sponsor a new mattress. The funds were transferred swiftly, and the mattress was delivered the following day.

Her reaction said it all. Though unable to speak, the gratitude on her face was unmistakable. It was more than relief—it was dignity, restored.

This experience speaks volumes about the quiet forms of elder neglect that often go unnoticed. It underscores the importance of listening, observing, and acting—even when the call for help is silent. Help the Aged Initiative continues its commitment to identifying and responding to such unseen suffering, one life at a time.

Because for many older persons, dignity doesn't come from grand gestures, but from the simple comfort of sleeping in a clean, safe bed.

MARUJIYA AND ZUKU COMMUNITIES RESPOND TO THE CALL FOR ELDERLY CARE

In a powerful testament to the ripple effect of community action, residents of Marujiya and Zuku in Bassa Local Government Area recently rallied together to support two elderly women whose needs had come to light during an intergenerational workshop organized by Help the Aged Initiative in July 2025.



During the workshop, which brought together caregivers and older adults to discuss elder care and community support, two elderly women shared quiet but urgent pleas. One, unable to speak, communicated her desire for assistance through tears. The other, a paralyzed and childless woman, had learned of the organization’s outreach and requested help with cleaning her home. Both stories left a lasting impression on the team.

True to their commitment, the Help the Aged Initiative returned to fulfill these promises. But what made the visit particularly remarkable was the spontaneous support from local women who volunteered their time to assist in the home clean-ups. What began as an outreach by one organization has grown into a broader community-driven movement.

“This is no longer just our initiative,” one team member noted. “It’s the community now taking ownership—responding with compassion and action.”

Community members have since begun organizing their own clean-ups and discussing future steps to ensure the well-being of their older population. For many, this marks a significant cultural shift—from viewing elder care as an individual burden to seeing it as a shared community responsibility.

This movement, ignited by two simple requests, speaks volumes about the transformative power of small acts of kindness. It is a reminder that change often

begins quietly—with a tear, a gesture, or a single visit—but can evolve into something much larger when people come together.



The Help the Aged Initiative continues to support and encourage this grassroots momentum. As one volunteer reflected, “This isn’t just about cleaning homes. It’s about restoring dignity, lifting burdens, and showing that no one should be forgotten in their old age.”

As the initiative looks ahead, the team remains hopeful. The growing involvement of local residents demonstrates that elder care is not only possible—it’s already happening.

WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY 2025

Standing Up for Dignity and Rights



To commemorate World Elder Abuse Awareness Day 2025, Help the Aged Initiative organized a powerful and timely awareness session that brought together older adults and youth caregivers from Jos North and Bassa communities. The event focused on recognizing, preventing, and responding to elder abuse while reinforcing the importance of dignity, autonomy, and rights in later life.

Participants were taken through a comprehensive discussion on the forms of elder abuse, ranging from neglect and financial exploitation to emotional and physical harm. The session emphasized the role of families, communities, and legal structures in protecting vulnerable older adults.

Barrister Nancy Jonathan, a seasoned legal practitioner, delivered a compelling presentation on human rights as they relate to older persons. She explained how legal frameworks can be applied to protect the elderly and encouraged participants to assert their rights without fear.

Mr. David Busa Buji, a respected human rights activist, further guided the audience through practical steps in identifying abuse, speaking up, and seeking help. His message was clear: abuse, in any form, must not be normalized—and everyone has a role to play in prevention.

One of the highlights of the session was a live case referral. Working in collaboration with Barrister Nancy, the team offered immediate referral support to a participant who had been struggling to access her unpaid gratuity. She was connected to Partners West Africa for free legal aid, providing a concrete outcome that reflected the day's mission.

The event was not only educational but deeply empowering. It created a safe space where older people could share their experiences and feel seen and heard. For many, it was the first time they publicly voiced concerns they had carried for years.



This session marks the beginning of a larger campaign. Over the next several days, Help the Aged Initiative will be sharing real stories from participants—honest and moving accounts that shed light on what elder abuse looks like in our communities and the ways in which we can collectively respond.

Through advocacy, education, and grassroots action, Help the Aged Initiative remains committed to fostering a society where older persons are treated with the care and respect they deserve.



Because every voice matters. Every story matters. And together, we can build a future where aging is met with dignity—not neglect.

PHASE 2

ELDERLY EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME

THEME: SIMPLE HUMAN VALUES: BRIDGING WISDOM AND COMPASSION TO COMBAT ELDERLY ISOLATION

SUPPORTED BY: IRIS

Overview

Phase 2 of the Elderly Empowerment Programme was implemented in four Plateau State communities (Rantya, Tudun Wada/Mado, Gyel, and Rusau) with the continued support of IRIS. Over 12 days, the programme directly impacted 250 elderly persons and their caregivers through a mix of intergenerational workshops, skill acquisition sessions, and home care interventions.

The programme addressed elderly isolation, created platforms for dialogue, built practical skills, and delivered direct interventions for those in urgent need of care.

Key Activities and Highlights

Intergenerational Workshops were held in all four communities, raising awareness of challenges faced by the elderly (including neglect and strained family dynamics such as mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationships). Expert facilitators guided discussions, fostering empathy and generating community-led solutions.

Skill Acquisition Training empowered elderly participants and caregivers with practical skills such as knitting, with participants producing their own items and expressing pride in their achievements.

HOME-BASED INTERVENTIONS BROUGHT DIRECT RELIEF TO THE MOST VULNERABLE

Medical support for an elderly woman without family or resources.

Full cleaning and sanitation of elderly residences, including the home of a paralyzed retired soldier.

Engagement of community members who contributed their time and energy to assist. Community Leadership Involvement: In Rusau, the 'Mai Angwa' addressed participants, underscoring the importance of community responsibility for elderly care.



Outcomes

- 250 individuals directly impacted (elderly persons and caregivers).
- Improved community awareness of elderly challenges and responsibilities.
- Increased confidence and dignity for the elderly through skills, health support, and clean living spaces.
- Strengthened community bonds, with local leaders and volunteers actively engaged.



Appreciation

We remain deeply grateful to IRIS for once again supporting this vision. The grant enabled us to bring tangible change to vulnerable elderly populations and their caregivers. Gratitude also goes to our facilitators, team members, volunteers, and community leaders who worked together to make this impact possible.

Conclusion

Phase 2 has reinforced that with compassion and collaboration, our elderly can be better cared for and integrated into the community. This project has laid a stronger foundation for future outreach, and we are committed to expanding this work to more communities.



CARING HANDS, STRONGER COMMUNITIES

Equipping the Next Generation with Elderly Care Skills for a Dignified Aging Experience



In a bid to promote dignified aging and bridge the growing gap in elderly care, Help the Aged Initiative in collaboration with the Iowa Resource for International Service (IRIS), organized a three-day intensive training program for young caregivers in Jos, Plateau State. The event, themed “Caring Hands, Stronger Communities: Equipping the Next Generation with Elderly Care

Skills for a Dignified Aging Experience,” took place from August 27th to 29th, 2025, at Government Secondary School, Kuwuri.

The training, which was funded through an IRIS Global Grant, was led by YES alumna Rahab Yachat Kwaja (YES '06), supported by one other alumna and ten volunteers. A total of 73 participants, including nurses, social workers, psychologists, and students from various backgrounds, took part in the capacity-building workshop aimed at developing practical skills in elderly caregiving.



According to Kwaja, the project was conceived out of a pressing need to address the challenges faced by older adults in Nigeria, many of whom suffer from chronic illnesses, mobility limitations, and social isolation. “We wanted to prepare young people to meet these needs with compassion and skill while promoting dignity and respect for older persons,” she explained.

Over the three-day period, participants received hands-on training in geriatric nursing, first aid and CPR, mental health and emotional support, and the fundamentals of caregiving. The sessions covered essential topics such as personal

hygiene, mobility assistance, emergency response, choking management, wound care, and the use of an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) during cardiac arrest.



The program was facilitated by a team of professionals, including geriatric nurses, social workers, and mental health experts. Mr. Ben Lawhas, a lecturer and social worker, led an impactful session on the role of social workers in elderly well-being, stressing the importance of advocacy, emotional support, and early detection of abuse or depression among older adults. Nurses Rapp Rwat Nyam, Ernest Emmanuel Daniyam, and Bright Timothy Gollen conducted the practical training sessions, guiding participants through real-life scenarios and emergency simulations.

In addition to the technical lessons, the training encouraged empathy and intergenerational connection. Participants were divided into small groups to engage in role-plays and case discussions designed to help them understand the emotional and psychological dimensions of caregiving.



The event concluded with a certificate presentation and pledges of continued support from local community leaders, including Rev. Joshua Auta, Senior Pastor of ECWA Gospel 2, and Rev. Gabriel Barnabas Akadon of Salama Baptist Church, Jenta Jos.

Many participants described the experience as transformative. “I did not just pass through the training; the training passed through me,” one participant remarked.

Another added, “Today is a dream come true for me. I’ll always cherish this opportunity to serve and care for our elders.”

Kwaja expressed gratitude to IRIS and the YES Alumni Network for their support, noting that the training has created a ripple effect that will extend far beyond the classroom. “These 73 young people are now better equipped to make a tangible difference in their families and communities. Together, we are building a future where aging is embraced with respect, empathy, and care,” she said.

The project, she added, is only the beginning. Plans are already underway to expand the program and establish continuous training opportunities in partnership with healthcare institutions, community organizations, and local authorities.

As Nigeria’s population continues to age, initiatives like this one are helping to ensure that older adults receive the quality care and respect they deserve—while empowering young people with the knowledge and compassion to make that possible.

HEALTHY HEARTS, HELPING HANDS

Strengthening Community Health Through Partnership

Date: Sunday, 21st September 2025

Venue: Our Lady of Fatima Cathedral, Jos



Following the successful completion of our IRIS-supported project held from August 27 to 29, 2025, Help the Aged Initiative received an invitation to collaborate with the Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs) of the Jos University Teaching Hospital (JUTH). This partnership emerged directly

from the visibility and impact created by the IRIS project and represented an important step forward in expanding our community health efforts. It also highlighted how one initiative can inspire broader collaboration and sustainable impact within our community.

Building on this momentum, the joint Community Health and CPR Outreach, themed “Healthy Hearts, Helping Hands,” was organized on Sunday, 21st September 2025, at Our Lady of Fatima Cathedral, Jos. The event brought together medical professionals, volunteers, and community members in a shared effort to strengthen health awareness and promote emergency response preparedness. The outreach provided an opportunity for people of all ages, including older adults, to access essential health services while learning practical life-saving skills.



Through this collaboration, hundreds of participants benefited from a wide range of free services, including sensitization and demonstrations on Cardiopulmonary

Resuscitation (CPR), medical consultations, health talks, and free health screenings covering blood pressure, blood sugar, and Body Mass Index (BMI). Essential medications were also distributed to support those managing existing health conditions. Beyond medical assistance, the outreach fostered awareness about preventive care and empowered individuals to take greater responsibility for their own health and that of others around them.

The success of this activity underscored the power of partnership between healthcare institutions and community-based organizations. By combining professional medical expertise with grassroots engagement, the initiative bridged gaps in health knowledge, improved community preparedness for medical emergencies, and strengthened collective commitment to compassionate care. For Help the Aged Initiative, this collaboration with the CRNAs and JUTH demonstrated the value of extending our advocacy for the well-being of older people into broader community health initiatives that serve all generations.



Help the Aged Initiative extends sincere appreciation to the Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists, Jos University Teaching Hospital, volunteers, and all community members who contributed to the success of this outreach. Together, we are advancing our mission to promote health, dignity, and social inclusion, while building a society where compassion and care remain at the heart of community development.